

Fact Sheet
September
2002

Environmental Justice Community Outreach



DEPARTMENT OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL

DTSC is one of six Boards and Departments within the California Environmental Protection Agency. DTSC's mission is to restore, protect and enhance the environment, to ensure public health, environmental quality and economic vitality, by regulating hazardous waste, conducting and overseeing cleanups, and developing and promoting pollution prevention.

State of California



California
Environmental
Protection Agency



What is Environmental Justice?

Environmental justice is defined in California law as "the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies"

Department of Toxic Substances Control defines environmental justice as "equal application of environmental protection for all communities and citizens without regard to race, national origin or income."

Environmental justice is a movement within low-income, minority communities concerned with reducing and eliminating potential "disproportionate" health and economic impacts associated with past and present industrial pollution.

Does DTSC Address Environmental Justice?

DTSC's Public Participation Program has recognized and addressed environmental justice issues over the years by encouraging community members to participate in the decision-making process. The focus has been on addressing cultural and community needs by:

- selecting times and places to hold meetings based on community norms
- providing translations and interpretations when appropriate
- establishing contacts in communities where DTSC is active
- inviting community leaders to participate in developing outreach activities
- requesting input from all people where environmental justice is of concern

DTSC's Roles & Responsibilities

DTSC regulates hazardous waste, cleans up existing contamination, and looks for ways to reduce the hazardous waste produced in California. Almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, and specialized support staff make sure that companies and individuals handle, transport, store, treat, dispose of, and clean up hazardous waste appropriately. Through these measures, DTSC contributes to greater safety for all Californians, and less hazardous waste reaches the environment.

DTSC is committed to establishing and implementing protective and consistent cleanup programs and standards that can serve as a model for California and the nation. Additionally, DTSC works to ensure that all new, existing and proposed school sites are environmentally safe. State laws require all proposed school sites that will receive state funding for purchase or construction go through DTSC's environmental review.

The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, see our web site at www.dtsc.ca.gov.

How Can DTSC Improve Its Environmental Justice Efforts?

In 2002, DTSC expanded its commitment to providing fair treatment for all Californians by hiring an Environmental Justice Coordinator to develop and implement a more wide-ranging and comprehensive program.

The Environmental Justice Coordinator focuses on identifying areas throughout the state that are affected by hazardous waste and then works to increase communication and reduce negative effects on those communities. A major element of this effort is conducting community assessments where environmental justice unease exists. DTSC will identify regional environmental issues, communication mechanisms and demographic data that will improve understanding, coordination and communication between DTSC and those communities.

The Environmental Justice Coordinator also audits DTSC's outreach efforts to communities with environmental concerns to ensure that all appropriate steps are taken to address those concerns. The audit function will also ensure that all DTSC programs are in compliance with the federal and state environmental justice laws.

Does DTSC's Environmental Justice Program Meet U.S. EPA Goals?

DTSC's Office of External Affairs is working closely with the United State Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) and the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) Office of Environmental Justice. The joint efforts have produced an environmental justice curriculum and a series of training opportunities for staff members.

Is Environmental Justice Addressed in State or Federal Law?

In 1994, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898, intended to ensure non-discrimination in federal programs that deal with public health and the environment. It also focuses federal attention on environmental and public health policies in minority and low-income communities. For more information contact: www.weact.org/ej_principles.html

In California, legislation signed into law during the late 1990s centralizes coordination of environmental justice programs within the Governor's Office of Plan-

ning and Research. It requires the participation of other state agencies including the California Environmental Protection Agency. Other legislation requires Cal/EPA to develop an interagency environmental justice strategy, and to report periodically to the Governor and Legislature on the implementation of environmental justice strategies.

The State of California is the first state to adopt and implement environmental justice legislation into its environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

- SB 115 (Solis, Chapter 690, Statutes of 1999)
- SB 89 (Escutia, Chapter 729, Statutes of 2000)
- SB 32 (Escutia, Chapter 764, Statutes of 2001)
- SB 828 (Alarcon, Chapter 765, Statutes of 2001)
- AB 1553 (Keeley, Chapter 762, Statutes of 2001)
- AB 1390 (Firebaugh, Chapter 763, Statutes of 2001)

To review the above legislation in its entirety please go to www.leginfo.ca.gov.

Where Can I Get More Information About Environmental Justice?

In 1991, the first National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit adopted the principles of environmental justice. These principles stated that all people have the right to meaningfully participate in the environmental decision-making arena, as well as a right to a healthy and safe environment. For additional information about the environmental justice movement visit www.weact.org/ej_principles.html

For more information about DTSC's environmental justice program, contact Kim Rhodes, Environmental Justice Coordinator, at (916) 255-3651 or at (800) 72TOXIC (1-800-728-6942). Also, you are welcome to send an e-mail message to Krhodes1@dtsc.ca.gov or visit DTSC's Web site at www.dtsc.ca.gov.

Notice to Hearing Impaired Individuals

TDD users can obtain additional information by using the California State Relay Service at 1-888-877-5378 to reach Kim Rhodes at (916) 255-3651.

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